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ABSTRACT

To determine the status of the Teacher Aide Program in the public community colleges in Florida, the current catalogs of 28 colleges were examined. In addition, the academic dean of each college not showing such a program was interviewed. A total of 12 programs were being offered in the community colleges. Results of the study showed that although each college's program was unique, there were similarities in relation to the requirements by all of the colleges for English composition, general psychology, and typewriting, as well as at least 15 semester hours of general education courses. Recommendations concern the establishment of regulations as to educational requirements for teacher aides. (DB)

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROCEDURES IN THE TEACHER AIDE PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN FLORIDA

A Research Study

by

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to examine the current procedures in Teacher Aide Programs in the community colleges in Florida. As a result of a review of the college catalogs, as well as of a survey of the deans of academic affairs of the colleges, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1) How many of the community colleges currently offer Teacher Aide Programs?
2) What is the diversity of the programs now being offered?
3) What identifiable commonalities exist among the programs currently being offered?
4) Can any valid predictions be made regarding the probable growth of such programs in the foreseeable future?
5) What recommendations seem appropriate regarding the further implementation of Teacher Aide Programs?

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Throughout Florida there are several thousands of teacher aides employed in local school districts. The aides, however, vary greatly in their educational backgrounds. Some are college graduates, while others have had no college training. Some have had specific and thorough indoctrination in teacher aide functions, while others have received virtually no orientation.

Two questions may well be asked: (1) are the state's 28 community colleges participating to an appreciable degree in the training of teacher aides? and (2) for those that are participating, what kinds of programs do they offer, and how extensive a role is that of the community colleges in the training of teacher aides?

With the utilization of teacher aides and paraprofessionals generally on the increase at all levels of education, this seems an appropriate time to appraise the status of teacher aide programs in Florida community colleges, and to attempt to reach some tentative conclusions regarding whether such programs have peaked, or whether the community colleges are likely to achieve their potential for training teacher aides. The results of this appraisal of teacher aide programs well may prove beneficial to individual community colleges, to the community college system, to colleges of education in Florida, and to educators who are concerned about the seeming lack of uniformity in the preparation and training of teacher aides throughout the state.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of related literature will encompass various aspects of the teacher aide movement, including the usage of teacher aides over the years, the functions of aides, the attitudes of teachers toward teacher aides, the views of educational administrators toward the use of teacher aides, and the outlook for the use of teacher aides in the foreseeable future.

The initial use of teacher aides occurred in a Bay City, Michigan, experiment in 1948, and, according to Gudridge (5), the local school officials were very reluctant to give up the use of teacher aides, once they had completed the experiment. It was not until the 1960's, however, that the teacher aide movement began to accelerate, and the number of aides, or paraprofessionals, now employed in or around public schools is estimated at nearly 300,000.

Such paraprofessionals are not always referred to as teacher aides. Tanner and Tanner (13) have noted that the following titles are used in lieu of the teacher aide designation: auxiliary aide, paraprofessional, subprofessional, nonprofessional, education aide, educational aide, instructional aide, school aide, technical aide, administrative aide, clerical aide, general aide, administrative assistant, teacher assistant, and instructional assistant. The foregoing list gives some indication of the wide range of responsibilities assigned to teacher aides.

One of the most controversial questions regarding the use of teacher aides involves the specific functions they are to perform. Tanner and Tanner in 1969 conducted a survey of all 50 state departments of education with respect to the legal status of teacher aides, policies or guidelines delimiting or defining

their functions, and how the state departments of education perceive teacher aide functions, regardless of laws and regulations existing within the various states. They found that, although all 50 states employed teacher aides, only 10 had laws regarding their functions and their employment, and only 11 had developed guidelines or policies regarding teacher aide activities.

There were 23 states which reported problems in differentiating between teaching and non-teaching functions. For instance, in some states the teacher aides may not supervise study halls, but in Connecticut and Montana they may do so. The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools has stipulated that "only regularly certificated teachers may be permitted to supervise study halls."

The Florida law specifies that teacher aides may not serve in instructional capacities unless they possess valid teaching certificates. They may not be used as substitute teachers, although "if a teacher aide is used as an emergency substitute teacher, he should be reported on the payroll as a substitute teacher and paid as a substitute teacher."

In contrast with Florida, the teacher aides in California are authorized to participate in instruction, with the regular teacher in each instance deciding what constitutes an instructional activity. In that state the teacher need not be present when the aide is instructing, while in Illinois the teacher must be present when a teacher aide is instructing. Thus, with respect to the instructional process, there seems to be no uniformity of state policies and regulations affecting teacher aide teaching functions.

Beyond the controversial instructional and study hall duties, however, there are literally dozens of other activities in which teacher aides may participate. The policy manual of one state specifies 107 approved functions for teacher aides, and throughout the nation those activities include such

functions as performing clerical duties within the school, assisting with audio-visual equipment, helping in the library, grading papers, and monitoring students in the lunchroom, the classroom, or on the playground.

It was inevitable that there arise differences of opinion with respect to what the teacher aide functions "ought to be." Bachus (1) has noted that the teacher and the aide sometimes become involved in a popularity contest, with the teacher feeling threatened by the aide's acceptance by the students. He has noted, too, that a sense of paralysis can develop within the classroom if the teacher aide performs too many minor chores normally handled by the students. At the same time, the teacher's personal touch with the students may be impaired when too many functions are delegated to the aide.

According to Olivero (11) a 1969 survey indicated that 14 percent of the teachers felt that their professional status was threatened by the presence of an aide in the classroom. The teacher aide, on the other hand, sometimes is better informed in certain subject areas than is the teacher and well may pose a threat to the latter's credibility.

In what ways can a better relationship be fostered between the teacher and the teacher aide? Hunter (8) has proposed a series of staff meetings within each school to determine what functions are to be delegated to aides. Also, she has suggested a need for in-service activities designed to inform the teacher aides of the teachers' expectations of them as well as to identify the specific functions which are to be assigned the aides. Grossman (4) has advocated the development of a "good" relationship between teacher and aide and has emphasized that this is most important in cases where a white teacher may have a black aide, or vice-versa. The students, as he has pointed out, thus may be exposed to a memorable example of cooperation between the races, a lesson that is not easily lost on young people.

The use of teacher aides has been viewed in a somewhat different perspective by educational administrators. As revealed by the Yale-Fairfield Study (7) completed in 1959, the utilization of teacher aides has advantages from both the instructional and financial points of view. Instructionally, the use of teacher aides provides more opportunities for individual attention, it permits greater specialization among teachers, and it appears to have raised students' standards of achievement in such areas as reading, mathematics, English, geography, and science. With respect to the financial aspects of education, the use of teacher aides has permitted larger classes, has eliminated double sessions, has provided a supply of students who have been encouraged to obtain four-year degrees, and has reduced somewhat the cost of educating students.

Regarding the latter point, Gudridge (5) has cited a Portland, Oregon, study showing that an aide tends to increase the teaching time of the teacher from a level of 92 minutes per day to 109 minutes per day, or a gain of about 20 percent during a five-hour teaching day. At the same time the aide contributes about two hours of teaching time per day on his or her own. The average cost of a teacher aide was found to be $8.80 per hour of instruction, compared with a cost of $16.00 per hour of instruction for the teacher.

Thus, on balance the use of teacher aides seems to have had far more proponents than detractors. Though a few observers (12) have concluded that the use of teacher aides tends to dilute the professional status of teachers, many others have lauded the contributions of teacher aides, particularly in unique teaching situations. For instance, Heppner (6) has shown how teacher aides have been used to great advantage in ghetto schools in California where students need additional help because of language, conceptual, and self-awareness problems. Too, Maves (9) has pointed out that teachers sometimes are not aware of children's real problems until a teacher aide, more familiar

with the needs of the students, is assigned to the class.

With most observers having been convinced of the overriding advantages of using teacher aides, it has been predicted (5) that the number of teacher aides employed by 1977 will be 1,500,000, or about five times the number now employed. Though this prediction, made by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, seems a bit exaggerated, the expected continued growth of the teacher aide movement does raise some questions regarding the kind of training considered most desirable for such individuals.

The ERIC Junior College Research Review (3) has noted that some of the Teacher Aide Programs offered by community colleges have faced serious obstacles in their implementation. Some programs were established along college parallel lines when what was really needed was an occupational program. In some locales the teacher aides were given no incentive to become involved in a two-year community college program, and in other instances the local school systems were already providing extensive training through in-service programs for their teacher aides.

College programs aside, there is a strong feeling among some educators that a formal training program, sometimes lasting two years, is not particularly useful in providing effective teacher aides. Those observers feel instead that the careful choice of interested and dedicated individuals who seem to have compassion for the unique needs of students is the most effective means of recruiting an outstanding group of teacher aides.

In summary, then, the teacher aide movement would appear to be lacking in uniformity regarding the states' regulations and policies governing such activities; it is clouded with controversy with respect to the extent to which aides should participate in direct instructional functions, and it is marked by strong disagreement among educators regarding the kinds and the degrees of training necessary to prepare teacher aides for the optimum performance of their duties.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF TEACHER AIDE PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF FLORIDA

In an effort to ascertain the status of Teacher Aide Programs in the public community colleges in Florida, the current catalogs of the 28 colleges were examined. That search revealed 10 such programs currently being offered. Inasmuch as college catalogs do not necessarily include every program available to students, the academic dean of each college not showing a Teacher Aide Program was contacted, and that survey revealed two additional community colleges with such programs.

Here is a list of the 12 community colleges in Florida now offering Teacher Aide Programs:

Brevard	Indian River
Broward	Manatee
Central Florida	Miami-Dade
Chipola	Okaloosa-Walton
Florida Keys	Palm Beach
Gulf Coast	Pensacola

Two other community colleges, St. Petersburg and Edison, indicated that they had had Teacher Aide Programs but had decided to discontinue them. In the case of St. Petersburg Community College, this was done because of a lack of student interest in the program, and in the case of Edison Community College the program was terminated because the local school board decided to offer its own training program for teacher aides.

Two of the community colleges, Pasco-Hernando and Valencia, indicated that they have considered instituting a Teacher Aide Program and may do so in the near future. On the other hand, six community colleges noted that they have considered such a program, but that they do not have any immediate plans to implement one. The other six community colleges either were

noncommital or indicated that they had had no occasion to consider setting up a Teacher Aide Program.

Of what kinds of courses should a Teacher Aide Program consist? Should it be primarily a college parallel program, should it be basically an occupationally-oriented program, or should it incorporate the best features of both types of programs?

Clark (2), in considering the design of a teacher aide curriculum and drawing heavily on the research done by the Bank Street College and the National Education Association, has suggested that the community college, in developing such a program, should work closely with the teachers and supervisors from the local school system. This would seem to be excellent advice, for those who represent the local schools should know best what sorts of activities the teacher aides need to be trained to perform.

Too, Clark has suggested that the instructional strategies to be used in implementing the program are very important, noting that such strategies will be dependent on the type of student to be enrolled in the program. She has suggested that greater emphasis may well be placed on a concrete approach rather than an abstract approach, and that whenever possible the courses should emphasize the utilization of laboratory techniques.

Here is Clark's proposed two-year teacher aide program:

FIRST YEAR

First Semester		Second Semester	
Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
Basic Communications	3	Basic Communications	3
Basic Mathematics	3	Basic Mathematics	3
Related Arts	3	Related Arts	3
Humanities	3	Humanities	3
Elementary Typing	2	Elementary Typing	2
Children's Activities	1	Children's Activities	1
	15		15

SECOND YEAR

First Semester		Second Semester	
Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
Machine Operations	3	Elementary School Procedures-Seminar	6
Child Development	6	Internship	6
Elective	3	Elementary School Resource Centers	3
Elective	3		
	15		15

Although the 60-hour program Clark has suggested contains some elements of a college parallel (transfer) program, it is also designed to provide many of the specific skills or understandings an aide may need in order to work more effectively with young people.

One fact that stands out insofar as any Teacher Aide Program is concerned is that there is no single format which is necessarily the "right" one or the "correct" one. In reviewing the 12 Teacher Aide Programs offered by Florida public community colleges, it appears that, by and large, they do not vary too much from Clark's proposed curriculum. For instance, appearing in over 50 percent of the 12 programs currently being offered are the following courses:

Course	Frequency of Appearance
English Composition	12
General Psychology	12
Typewriting	12
Speech	7
A-V Equipment and A-V Techniques	8
Perspectives in Education	8
History	8
Basic Mathematics	8
Humanities	7
Physical Science or Biology	10
Child Psychology	7
Internship or Practicum	8

In addition to the above concentrations of courses, there are two

community colleges which offer separate secretarial programs designed for teacher aides, and there are four colleges which include several secretarial skills courses in their teacher aide curricula.

Again, each college's Teacher Aide Program is unique, and it may be surmised that each program reflects the curriculum needs of teacher aides as those needs are perceived both by community college and local school system personnel. Yet there does remain the problem of a significant lack of agreement among educators regarding what kind of training is best for teacher aides. Undoubtedly, this problem is even more acute among the local school systems which offer their own "Teacher Aide Programs" ranging from an introductory course or so, up to what amounts to a full year's training program. This research report does not address itself to an examination of the county-maintained Teacher Aide Programs, but it seems quite obvious that the lack of uniformity and comprehensiveness among the various county programs represents a situation which is much in need of being remedied.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been noted that, despite their uniqueness, the 12 Teacher Aide Programs being offered by the public community colleges in Florida do have some similarities. This is particularly true with respect to the across-the-board requirements of English Composition, General Psychology, and Typewriting, as well as the inclusion in each program of at least 15 semester hours of general education courses. Also, it has been observed that two Florida community colleges have discontinued their Teacher Aide Programs because of low enrollment and duplication of effort by the local school systems. The 12 surviving programs may or may not be in jeopardy, but the fact that fully 16 of the community colleges have no Teacher Aide Programs raises the question of what kind of training the teacher aides are receiving in these 16 community college districts.

At the very least, each of the Teacher Aide Programs currently being offered should be subjected to periodic evaluation. Clark (2) has suggested that, following the completion of the internship period, each teacher aide should be asked to assess, in writing, the Teacher Aide Program in which the aide had been enrolled. The following questions well may form a nucleus for the appraisal:

1) What learning experiences proved most helpful in the classroom?
2) Which learning experiences were of most significance?
3) What skills or techniques do you think you need in order to improve your efficiency in the classroom?
4) In what classroom activities did you feel most competent?
5) What changes in the training program would you suggest in order to improve the program?

Also, the program should be evaluated by those with whom the aide

works, in terms of how well the program appears to have prepared the individual to perform in a teacher aide capacity.

The community college may be content to measure the success of its Teacher Aide Program in terms of its enrollment and its number of graduates, but the concept of accountability would seem to require a periodic in-depth evaluation of how well the program has functioned in preparing the teacher aides for actual employment situations.

Beyond the presently functioning Teacher Aide Programs, there should be raised the question of how such programs can be improved. Two-thirds of the programs already include a practicum or an internship providing from three to six hours of credit for anywhere from a few weeks to several months of on-the-job training for the teacher aides. Having gone this far with the practical application of knowledge and skills gained by the teacher aide enrollees, the suggestion can be made that Teacher Aide Programs be organized along cooperative education lines. White (15) has noted that such a program, whereby teacher aides would be paired in such a way that one would be attending college for a semester while the other was employed as an aide, has much to recommend it. For instance, aides would gain valuable insights regarding school and classroom problems which then can be related to courses contained in the Teacher Aide Program. Through regular feedback of this kind the courses and the program itself can be strengthened. Too, those aides who go on to obtain four-year degrees and become teachers should be able to relate better to, and utilize more effectively, the aides who are assigned to them. Thus, White's proposal is an interesting one and tends to add a new dimension to the training of teacher aides.

Recommendations

In view of the lack of uniformity of the Teacher Aide Programs currently

being offered, and in light of the fact that well over half of the community colleges in Florida have no such programs, it would seem reasonable that several recommendations be made at this point regarding the future development of the teacher aide movement in Florida:

1) A State Department of Education regulation should be established specifying a minimum college educational requirement for teacher aides.

2) A minimum of 15 semester hours should be completed by each would-be teacher aide prior to employment in an internship capacity. The completion of a 30-hour, two-semester program would be required before the aide could be employed on a full-time basis, and such training would be offered only by community colleges in an approved Teacher Aide Program.

3) A two-year, 60-hour Teacher Aide Program representing a continuation of the 30-hour program specified above should be required of all teacher aides who aspire to actually help with teaching functions in the classroom. Again, such programs would be offered only by community colleges, and those who complete the curriculum would then be designated as Teaching Assistants.

4) As soon as practicable, a cooperative education option should be added to the two-year Teaching Assistant Program, with on-the-job experience to begin at the conclusion of the first full term of college study.

5) Both the one-year certificate program and the two-year degree program should be established along Associate of Science degree

lines, with an Associate of Arts degree option available to students who anticipate continuing their education in a four-year institution.

6) There should be a planning period of at least two years prior to the establishment and the implementation of the programs indicated above.

With the establishment of such stringent regulations governing the education and the employment of teacher aides and teaching assistants, it is anticipated that many local school systems and perhaps some community colleges which already are operating their own Teacher Aide Programs may feel discriminated against. Yet, one must weigh such a disadvantage against the real value of specific teacher aide regulations covering all 67 counties in Florida.

Without a doubt the 28 community colleges are admirably suited to the educational task of training teacher aides for employment throughout the state. To permit them to do so exclusively would eliminate the hodge-podge of teacher aide training programs now operated by various county school systems; it would give added unity to the current offerings of the community colleges; and it would pave the way for the orderly growth of the teacher aide movement in Florida.

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